

THE VRC CONNECTION

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

February 2012

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 1

New State Emergency Operations Center

By Julia Jarema, NCEM

North Carolina Emergency Management moved into the new Emergency Operations Center during the first week in December. The division occupies most of the ground floor of the four-story NC National Guard Joint Force Headquarters. The new building is located on the southern portion of NCNG's existing campus in west Raleigh.

The State Highway Patrol's Troop C communications center, the NC Department of Transportation's traffic congestion management center and the NC Turnpike Authority are also located at the new complex.



Media Briefing Room at the new State Emergency Operations Center

"This new state of the art facility will provide ample room for all of our State Emergency Response Team partners to work together and coordinate joint response activities when disaster strikes," said Doug Hoell.

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Situation Briefing Room at the new Emergency Operations Center

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NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE &
CONSUMER SERVICES

Emergency Programs Division

Steve Troxler, Commissioner

Sharron Stewart, Director



McGuire Nuclear Exercise

By Christina Law, DVM, NCDA&CS

I remember as a veterinary student learning about the different types of radiation used to either diagnose or treat disease processes in our animals. I don't recall spending much time considering other sources of radiation, such as nuclear power plant failure or a nuclear bomb and the potential danger to our animals, our food supply, and public health. Maybe I didn't want to think about it, as it is a scary thought. But I have realized that in the real world, sometimes you have to face the things that you don't want to think about so that you can come up with a plan to be able to deal with those problems, should they arise.

Over the last several months, I have had the extraordinary opportunity, along with Mark Howell, who is one of our Emergency Programs specialists, to serve on the McGuire Nuclear Task Force subcommittee for companion animal decontamination and sheltering in a nuclear event. We served in an advisory role along with representatives from Emergency Management and Public Health for the writing of a plan for our companion animals. Karyn Yaussy, Emergency Management Coordinator for Catawba County, was the primary author of this companion animal plan. We hope to exercise this plan in April during the Catawba Nuclear Exercise.



McGuire Nuclear Plant

In the mean time, we were invited to participate in the McGuire Nuclear Exercise on August 9 so that we would be familiar with general response to a nuclear disaster. The exercise was a state-wide event that took part at the McGuire Nuclear Facility with activation of multiple Emergency

Operation Centers in the state. Mark and I joined Emergency Management and other participating agencies in the Western Region Coordination Center in Hickory as the exercise unfolded. It was an excellent reinforcement of our training and use of the Incident Command System. We were tasked with writing the incident action plan and served as technical specialists for any animal or agriculture related issues that came up during the exercise. Some of these issues included: getting the word out to farmers to shelter their livestock in barns and to cover grain storage areas, as well as to secure and set up emergency sheltering for companion animals that would be arriving with their evacuated owners.

I was very impressed with the thoroughness of the exercise and that these very important issues were included for discussion. These exercises ensure that all levels of nuclear disaster response are functional. Exercising our plans also allows for correction of any issues found during the exercise so that we may be even more appropriately prepared if we are ever faced with a real event. A lot of time, planning and evaluating go into the exercising of an emergency plan and we look forward to exercising the companion animal decontamination and sheltering plan. Appropriate training for human and animal safety, use of personal protective equipment, setting up emergency animal sheltering, animal handling and use of radiologic monitoring equipment will be key discussion points in exercising this plan. It was a fantastic experience to participate in the McGuire Nuclear Exercise. By participating we became more familiar with how all of the different agencies work together and were able to reinforce the importance of protecting our agriculture industry and companion animals in a nuclear event.

2011 Agriculture Emergency Operations Center (AgEOC) Activation

By Carrie Sticklin, NCDA&CS

HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS AgEOC ACTIVATION



The NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Emergency Programs Division organized a hurricane preparedness seminar on August 9 in the AgEOC of the Agriculture Building in Raleigh. This event allowed various divisions of the NCDA&CS, as well as a few of our non-governmental partners, to come together to exercise and review AgEOC protocols utilized during an activation. Participants included representatives from NCDA&CS, USDA APHIS Veterinary Services, USDA APHIS Animal Care, NC Horse Council, NC Farm Bureau and the State Agriculture Response Team.

NCDA&CS embraces operating within the Incident Command Structure and continues to utilize this system when coordinating agricultural responses. The day began with an ICS refresher and ended with a wrap up by Sharron Stewart, director of the Emergency Programs Division.

The objectives for the AgEOC activation were:

1. Communications – demonstrate the use of cell phones and 800 MHz radios to establish and maintain effective communications during a response to an event;
2. Ag Emergency Operations Center Management - demonstrate the ability to activate, staff and utilize the AgEOC to coordinate and support multiple divisions responding to an event and resource management; and
3. Use of WebEOC and other tools - demonstrate the ability to identify, mobilize and manage resources across the department and within the State EM system that are required to support a response to an event.

As part of the agenda, Bill Reh, a meteorologist from NBC 17, discussed hurricane season forecasting with participants. Robert Hilton, Tim Muhs and Daniel Pennell of Emergency Programs and Carla Woodlief of NC Emergency Management demonstrated various tools utilized in a response. Demonstrations included WebEOC, HurriVac, and time and mileage tracking applications.

As a follow up to the AgEOC activation, EP requested feedback from all participants on ways to improve operations during a natural disaster response.

VRC MISSION: Train and prepare professionals in the animal care community to respond to disaster events (all hazards) that affect both production and companion animals. Our members will serve as a resource for our state and the nation.

NOTES: To see recent news and updates, please visit the VRC website at www.ncvrc.org. If you have questions about the VRC or would like to offer suggestions or articles for future newsletters, contact Mandy at mandy.tolson@ncagr.gov.

Vaccinating Against Rabies: Answers to some Difficult Questions

By Marilyn Goss Haskell, DVM, MPH, NC DHHS

Rabies is preventable in dogs, cats and ferrets simply by keeping animals currently vaccinated against rabies. Recently at the 2011 NC Veterinary Conference, veterinarians were queried about their knowledge of NC Rabies Laws and rabies vaccination protocol. Test yourself and then see if you correctly answered the questions below!

1. Which NC agency/department/organization “owns” rabies law?

The NC Department of Health and Human Services is the state agency that has regulatory authority over the NC Rabies Laws, located in Chapter 130A, the public health chapter of the NC general statutes (G.S.) and can be accessed at <http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/rabies/pdf/NCRabiesLaws.pdf>. Public Health Veterinarians within the Veterinary Public Health program provide 24/7 consultations for human and animal rabies risk assessments to healthcare providers, local health departments and animal control, veterinarians and NC residents.



2. What's the minimum legal age a dog/cat/ferret residing in NC is to be vaccinated against rabies?

According to NC G.S. 130A-185, the owner of any dog, cat or ferret over four months of age shall keep their animal “currently” vaccinated against rabies. However, many rabies vaccines are licensed and approved for primary vaccination as early as 3 months (12 weeks) of age and the owner would still be compliant with NC general statute if the animal were vaccinated between 3 and 4 months of age is so indicated in the manufacturer's package insert. See the 2011 Rabies Compendium for a list of USDA licensed vaccines by manufacturer, species, duration of immunity and age of primary vaccination, <http://www.nasphv.org/Documents/RabiesCompendium.pdf>. This information is also available in the vaccine manufacturers' package inserts.

3. How soon after the initial rabies vaccination is a dog/cat considered immunized?

According to NC G.S. 130A-197, when a dog, cat or ferret that has never been previously vaccinated against rabies receives a primary rabies vaccination, the animal is considered “currently vaccinated” against rabies 28 days after the date of that initial or primary rabies vaccination. It is important to emphasize to owners that they should carefully supervise their animals particularly during this period of time because the animal will not be considered immunized and “current” in the eyes of the law, if exposed to rabies. In the unfortunate event that the “not currently vaccinated” animal is exposed to or potentially exposed to rabies, the animal would be subject to euthanasia or up to a 6 months quarantine at the owner's expense. This statute is usually enforced by animal control under the direction of the local health director.

4. What are the legal implications for a 5-year old pet dog that is provoked by and bites a neighbor's child,
 (a.) if the dog's rabies vaccination status is current?
 (b.) if the dog is only overdue for a 3-year rabies booster by 5 days?

The response is the same for both (a.) and (b.). Any domestic dog, cat or ferret, regardless of vaccination status, that bites a person shall be immediately confined for 10 days in a place designated by the local health director (NC G.S. 130A-196). After reviewing the circumstances of the particular case, the local health director may allow the owner to confine the animal on the owner's property.

5. In NC, what procedure exists for a licensed veterinarian to "exempt" a dog/cat from the rabies vaccination requirement if, on examination, the patient is deemed too ill/sick to vaccinate?

There is no legally accepted exemption or waiver of rabies vaccination for dogs, cats, or ferrets in North Carolina. NC G.S. 130A-185 requires that owners of all dogs, cats and ferrets four months of age and older maintain their animals currently vaccinated against rabies. The intent of the rabies laws is to protect both domestic animals and the public against rabies. It is important to emphasize to owners that if they elect, against your advice, not to vaccinate their animals, that they will not be in compliance with state law and that should an exposure or a potential exposure to rabies occur to their "not currently vaccinated" pet that according to NC G.S. 130A-197, the pet shall be subject to euthanasia or up to six months quarantine, at the discretion of the local health director.



For more answers to difficult questions about rabies, visit our website at www.ncvrc.org.

VRC COORDINATOR	UPCOMING EVENTS:	REQUIREMENTS FOR VRC DEPLOYMENT
Mandy Tolson, DVM Southeast Region Emergency Programs Veterinarian (252) 813-0989 Mandy.Tolson@ncagr.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see our website for future training and activities. • Check out our sheltering webinars now posted on the website! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICS 100, 200 and 700 • Biosecurity/PPE Training • Knowledge of NC Emergency Management • Knowledge of Emergency Support Functions • Attendance at VRC Meetings • Sign a Code of Conduct
COMPLETE YOUR VRC REGISTRATION AT WWW.SERVNC.ORG		

One Health and One Medicine

By Julie Casani, MD, PHPR

The link between preparedness in (human) public health and veterinary care is not always as obvious as one would like it to be. Recently, I reviewed the West Nile Virus events of 1999 and reflected on whether or not things have actually changed since then.



If you recall, in 1999, veterinarians began to observe illnesses in exotic birds in the Central Park Zoo and in scavenger crows in the Bronx. At the same time, members of the New York City Department of Health staff were investigating reports of cases of neurologic disease initially thought to be St. Louis Encephalitis. After a significant effort in laboratory testing and anatomical examination, both lines of investigation came to the same conclusion that this was indeed West Nile Virus infection, not identified in North America before this time. Very quickly the two communities began responding together in order to contain the illness, initiate active surveillance and deliver information to the general public as well as practitioners. One of the most critical outcomes of this event was the need to erode the silos of practice whether it be prevention, surveillance, laboratory investigation or clinical care.

Since then there has been a lot of progress. At the government, county and state levels, there is increasing activity in planning and response. Joint committees such as the Food Safety and Defense Task Force and the Avian Influenza Task Force were established to develop plans to address issues that affect the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Wildlife Resources Commission and the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health. At the county government level there is evidence of similar planning and response through activities such as animal control responsibilities, rabies control programs, etc.

However, the link at the practitioners' level is not so apparent and may not be so robust. At a recent One Health Intellectual Exchange Group (IEG) meeting, veterinarian and medical professionals were discussing the potential hazards of using live, attenuated vaccines on exotic and wildlife animals. The physicians remarked that practitioners may not ask routine questions about ownership of exotic pets or contact with wildlife and may not even be aware of the potential risks of this type of contact. It is not clear to the IEG nor to those of us in government roles how to get this information out to practitioners and we rely on local connections.

Planning at the local level has addressed concerns related to potassium iodide for companion animals and drafted media releases are ready for use. Potassium iodide for human consumption as protection for thyroid cancer in the event of a release has been distributed within the 10-mile Emergency Preparedness Zones (EPZs). However, this cache of medication is not intended for companion animals or farm animals. Plans should be in place for these animals. Equally important are educational tools for practicing veterinarians in these communities.

In the 12 years since the NYC West Nile Virus events, there have been tremendous strides in bridging the human health- veterinarian health gap. Each discipline has markedly improved its vertical reporting chains however, horizontally at the practitioner level, there is still work to be done.

Shearon Harris Nuclear Power Plant Exercise

By Bruce Akers, DVM, NCDA&CS

On a beautiful November day, an alert call came into the NCDA&CS Emergency Programs Division. Thankfully, this activation call was only an exercise, as we had plenty of practice in 2011 with real events. This call was for personnel to respond and staff the State's Emergency Operations Center for a mock disaster at the Shearon Harris Nuclear Power Plant.

Why, you ask, would we be involved in a Power Plant Exercise? First, you must understand that North Carolina falls within the affected zones for five Nuclear Power Plants, not all of which are located in North Carolina. The State as a whole must exercise their plans in support of these plants to protect our residents. NCDA&CS plays an integral part of advising the State Emergency Management on issues related to food and commodities. There are many farms and related businesses in proximity to the five nuclear power plants. NCDA&CS assesses potential impacts to farmers and food industries. In addition to the regulatory responsibility over food, NCDA&CS would also be involved in activities related to sheltering companion animals in an evacuation, and the department's Food Distribution Division is an integral resource for Emergency Management in acquiring USDA food reserves.

The exercise was originally scheduled to take place in April, but was rescheduled due to the tornado outbreak. In November, though, it was still unannounced as to when the event would develop.

The State EM had not yet activated their new Emergency Operations Center near Reedy Creek Road, so EP staffers were at their workstations within minutes and joined by NCSU Cooperative Extension Service personnel shortly afterwards. The staff went to work immediately setting up their computer stations and gathering and assessing information relating to this training scenario. The event occurred as a sequence of multiple small "low likely" events all occurring in sequence. These caused the plant's notification and emergency plans to be activated. Full activation of the State EOC assembled all the subject matter experts necessary to assess and prepare for any potential escalation of the situation.

The Emergency Support Function 11 (ESF11 – Food & Agriculture) desks were busy, gathering enough weather and event information to allow our GIS experts to produce the important map products needed. These allow our staffers and other mass care agencies gathered in the Human Services Section to start planning for potential needs of sheltering and feeding should an evacuation be initiated. The maps allowed staffers to assess which farming and food industries would likely be impacted, and tailor information releases for them based on their needs.



Shearon Harris Nuclear Power Plant

The hourly briefings continued throughout the day. These exercises nearly always have a compressed timeline, accelerating day long events into just a few hours. This helps simulate the stress of a real event.

Thankfully, the event scenario was managed to a level only requiring a small/limited evacuation for a populace in very close proximity and only affecting a small number of farms. By late afternoon, the mock event was corrected at the plant and all was on its way to ramping down – whew!! Saved another one!

VRC Member Spotlight

Eileen Coite, NC Cooperative Extension



Eileen Coite is an agricultural extension agent with NC Cooperative Extension in Wayne County. She is a 1992 and 2006 graduate of North Carolina State University with a BS in Animal Science, and Master of Animal Science in physiology. Upon graduation she began her career with Murphy Family Farms, working in the pork industry as a sow farm manager and later a production management trainer.

In March of 2000, she left Murphy-Brown and became an extension agent, specializing in livestock and forages. Her responsibilities include all aspects of livestock, horse, animal waste management, forage production, 4-H and youth education as it relates to livestock and horses. She is the Wayne County Animal Response Team coordinator and the Regional Equine Information Network System (REINS) Coordinator for Region 13.

Eileen resides in Seven Springs and is a member of Zion United Methodist Church in Pricetown. She is a member of the National and NC Association of County Agricultural Agents, the NC Pork Council, the NC Cattlemen's Association, the Wayne County Cattlemen's Association and the Wayne County Livestock Development Association. She has two quarter horses and is an active member of the NC Quarter Horse Association, serving as the NCQHA District IV secretary. She enjoys traveling, as well as riding and showing her horses in her spare time.

New State Emergency Operations Center

(Continued from page 1)

NCEM's administrative staff, the 24-hour communications center, and the Plans, Operations and Logistics sections are located in the new building. The Recovery and Geospatial and Technology Management sections will move into the renovated Bowers military center early next year.

The 237,000 square foot headquarters was funded with \$41.5 million in stimulus funds and \$14.5 million that had previously been set aside for a new facility.

NC Emergency Management

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